

# Delaware Working to Make Schools Safer

*(Smyrna)* – As we close “Safe Schools Week” across the country, and in Delaware, efforts to enhance safety in public and charter schools throughout the state are chronicled in a recent report from Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) Secretary Robert Coupe to the General Assembly. The report enumerates the successes in school compliance with the Omnibus Safety Act, approved by the General Assembly in 2012, and indicates how schools are becoming more active in programs to enhance safety for our children.

The Comprehensive School Safety Program (CSSP), created by the Omnibus Safety Act, was transferred from the Office of the DSHS Secretary to the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) in May, resulting in a strengthening of the existing synergies between the two agencies, enhanced CSSP resources, while it boosted emergency planning for schools.

The CSSP report indicates progress in all areas of school safety in Delaware. School administrators are required to provide annual reports to the DSHS that show compliance by individual schools. A school must complete two Lockdown/Intruder drills and one Tabletop exercise each academic school year in order to be considered compliant with the Omnibus School Safety Act.

Using comparative figures, the report shows improvement during the 2016-2017 school years as opposed to the 2015-2016 school years. Specifically, the number of schools that are compliant rose from 69% to 95%. 15 school districts in the state are now 100% compliant, while only six districts had achieved that level in the previous period. 135 schools received on-site training in the 2016-2017 school years, while only 72 had on-site training in 2015-2016.

The growth in the compliance rate is a result of a concerted effort by CSSP staff, along with a growing relationship between the schools, and first responders. CSSP staff is available to school administrators if there is an emergency. After an incident, staff meets with school officials to review actions taken and outline measures for improvement.

CSSP staff will be updating review processes for all comprehensive school safety plans, to assure that they are inline best practices, supported by lessons learned. The updated review process begins in January, 2018, and will be an ongoing effort. A new web page will serve as a School Safety Resource Center, and will be available to all schools in the state, including private schools and daycare centers.

A one-day safety symposium is planned for the summer of 2018, to bring together first responders and educators in a no-fault learning environment designed to foster partnerships, enhance school safety, and make administrators, staff, first responders, and parents more aware of the resources available.